

# Chapter 7 - Support Services

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*Teachers, parents, support personnel, and mentors are all critical in the development of the whole [gifted and talented] child.*

—Ken Seeley  
Colorado Foundation  
Denver, Colorado

## Introduction

All students should have access to support services, but gifted and talented students by their nature have unique needs requiring specialized services (24 S.C. Code Ann. Regs. 43-220.2(A)(1)(b)). This chapter examines the following types of services or resources: school guidance, academic support (including academic competitions), technology, parent education, and national and state organizations.

## School Guidance Services

### Developmental Counseling

A developmental counseling program should foster both the cognitive and affective growth of gifted and talented students. One of the primary goals of the counselor should be to ensure that identified students, particularly those in underserved populations, have the support needed to remain in the gifted and talented program. An effective school guidance program must identify and implement strategies to help gifted and talented students meet success in their differentiated curriculum.

Developmental counseling should include individual and group counseling sessions. In individual sessions, gifted and talented students can learn to understand their strengths and weaknesses as decision-makers and to take responsibility for their lives. In group sessions, the counselor can address topics of common concern to gifted and talented students.

According to Colangelo (1997), school guidance services should include a developmental counseling program with the following components:

- ◆ An articulated and coherent rationale;
- ◆ A program of activities based on the affective and cognitive needs of gifted and talented students;
- ◆ Trained counselors who are well grounded in counseling and in giftedness;
- ◆ A minimum of attention to rehabilitative services, but a strong component of individual, family, and teacher consultations;
- ◆ Input and participation from teachers, administrators, parents, and the students who are served; and
- ◆ Provision for the continued professional development of the counselor so that he or she can keep pace with the latest research and practices in counseling gifted and talented students.

The developmental counseling program for gifted and talented students must recognize a consistent set of issues and concerns that can affect this population. The list below indicates the set of gifted and talented student concerns identified by Strop (1983).

- ◆ Establishing and maintaining positive relationships with peers;
- ◆ Dealing with oversensitivity to what others say and do;
- ◆ Making appropriate career choices;
- ◆ Developing the ability to relax and relieve tension;
- ◆ Maintaining the motivation and desire to achieve;
- ◆ Developing positive leadership skills;
- ◆ Getting along with siblings;
- ◆ Developing tolerance;
- ◆ Dealing with striving for perfection;
- ◆ Avoiding prolonged periods of boredom.

Similarly, Silverman (1994) lists specific issues or problems that gifted and talented students may face due to their situations or personalities.

- ◆ Underachievement
- ◆ Depression (often masked as boredom)
- ◆ Hiding abilities
- ◆ Understanding their introversion
- ◆ Uneven development
- ◆ Excessive competitiveness
- ◆ Hostility of others toward their abilities
- ◆ Feeling overly responsible for others
- ◆ Being overshadowed in the family by the oldest sibling
- ◆ Hidden handicaps
- ◆ Lack of true peers

Taking these needs into consideration, Silverman (1994) recommends the following topics for an affective program designed for gifted and talented students.

- |                            |                                 |
|----------------------------|---------------------------------|
| ◆ Understanding Giftedness | ◆ Social Skills                 |
| ◆ Self-Expectations        | ◆ Dealing with Stress           |
| ◆ Fear of Failure          | ◆ Sensitivity                   |
| ◆ Expectations of Others   | ◆ Tolerance                     |
| ◆ Feeling Different        | ◆ Family Dynamics               |
| ◆ Uneven Development       | ◆ Responsibility for Others     |
| ◆ Introversion             | ◆ Developing Study Habits       |
| ◆ Peer Pressure            | ◆ Developing Leadership Ability |
| ◆ Competitiveness          | ◆ Career Exploration            |
| ◆ Guilt                    |                                 |

The table below (from VanTassel-Baska, 1998) illustrates how school counselors can address the needs of the gifted and talented in a developmental counseling program.

<b>Linkage of Counseling Needs of the Gifted to Strategies for Intervention</b>	
<b>Social-Emotional Needs of the Gifted</b>	<b>Strategies to Address the Needs</b>
To understand the ways in which they are different from other children and the ways in which they are the same	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Use bibliotherapy techniques</li> <li>2. Establish group discussion seminars</li> <li>3. Hold individual dialogue sessions</li> </ol>
To appreciate and treasure their own individuality and the individual differences of others	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Promote biography study</li> <li>2. Honor diverse talents through awards, performance sessions, special seminars, and symposia</li> <li>3. Encourage contest and competitive entry</li> </ol>
To understand and develop social skills that allow them to cope adequately within relationships	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Teach creative problem solving in dyads and small groups</li> <li>2. Create role-playing scenarios</li> <li>3. Devise appropriate simulation activities</li> </ol>
To develop an appreciation for their high-level sensitivity that may manifest itself in humor, artistic endeavors, and intensified emotional experiences	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Encourage positive and expressive outlets for sensitivity, such as tutoring, volunteer work, art, music, and drama</li> <li>2. Promote journal writing that captures feelings about key experiences</li> </ol>
To gain a realistic assessment of their ability and talents and how they can be nurtured	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Provide for regular testing and assessment procedures</li> <li>2. Provide for grouping opportunities with others of similar abilities and interest</li> </ol>
To develop an understanding of the distinction between the “pursuit of excellence” and the “pursuit of perfection”	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Create a “safe” environment to experiment with failure</li> <li>2. Promote risk-taking behavior</li> </ol>
To learn the art and science of compromise	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Provide “cooperation games”</li> <li>2. Work on goal setting</li> <li>3. Encourage the development of a philosophy of life</li> </ol>

## Career Counseling

As with developmental counseling, school counselors must have an understanding of the unique nature and needs of the gifted and talented in order to provide effective career guidance. An often overlooked problem for multi-talented students is choosing which of their interests to pursue vocationally and which to keep as avocational. While some gifted and talented children know from an early age “what they want to be when they grow up,” others may delay their career decisions. Counselors need to understand and honor this situation while helping students explore varied career opportunities and options. The assumption that gifted and talented students do not need career counseling is false.

According to Silverman (1993), career counseling for gifted and talented students should be sensitive to their multiple interests, the existential dilemmas they face in making choices, their fear of making an error, their fear of being less than ideal or not living up to their potential, the depth of their sadness over the road not taken, and their fear that if they try to nurture all their potentials, they will end up second rate at everything.

An effective career counseling program may assist gifted and talented students by

- ◆ Preparing them for many options;
- ◆ Providing them with information about careers in which they would have the opportunity to synthesize interests from many fields;
- ◆ Allowing them to delay decision-making until college;
- ◆ Giving them real-life experiences in some of their interest fields;
- ◆ Discussing the possibility of serial or concurrent careers;
- ◆ Helping them determine which of their interests they could maintain as avocations;
- ◆ Suggesting the possibility of creating new careers;
- ◆ Exploring life themes as a basis for career choice.

Some futurists are predicting that today’s students will have several careers and many different kinds of jobs during their professional lives. Therefore, students must be given information about how their strengths and interests relate to various fields of endeavor and numerous careers. Real-life experiences can help gifted and talented students gain perspective on their career possibilities. Examples of such experiences include the Executive Internship Program, mentoring or shadowing, and service learning projects or volunteer work. Each of these opportunities is described more fully in the following table.

Examples of Real-Life Experiences
<p><b>Executive Internship Program</b></p> <p>This program enables students to spend time with professionals at the work site and in areas in which students have interests. Students keep logs of their field experiences, complete related assignments, and receive high school credit for their participation in the program.</p>
<p><b>Mentoring and Shadowing</b></p> <p>Like the Executive Internship Program, a mentoring program can provide a student with the opportunity to work with and learn from a practicing professional. Shadowing experiences can serve a similar function. The latter may be especially helpful to students who have a wide variety of interests and aptitudes.</p>
<p><b>Service Learning Projects &amp; Volunteer Work</b></p> <p>Students can also gain real-life experiences through service learning projects and volunteer work in the community. Counselors can assist students with these opportunities by finding qualified adults or service organizations in the community, helping students plan and organize the experiences, and ensuring that students take time to reflect on their experiences.</p>

## College Counseling

College counseling for gifted and talented students must begin in middle school. School counselors should steer students toward appropriate classes that will prepare them for Advanced Placement and/or International Baccalaureate coursework in high school. Parents of gifted and talented students must understand the importance and implications of coursework selection in the middle school.

Gifted and talented students should take the most challenging courses possible to prepare them for the rigors of high school studies, the ACT/SAT, and admission to the college of their choice. Such middle school choices establish the foundation for student success in high school and beyond.

Early in high school, gifted and talented students and their parents should be given information on college requirements for admission, along with scholarship opportunities. Students should know where to obtain college catalogs and how to access college websites. Taking the PSAT/PLAN and/or SAT/ACT annually in high school enables the student to provide information to colleges and may help the student to improve his/her scores. The gifted and talented student may learn from this practice

that specific colleges are interested in having him/her on their campus. Many colleges actively recruit academically gifted and talented students based on their performance.

School counselors should make gifted and talented students aware of the many factors that competitive colleges and universities examine when considering candidates for admission. In addition to grade point averages, class rank, and ACT/SAT scores, college admission criteria usually include experiences such as extracurricular activities, community service, and leadership positions. Also of increasing importance are character traits communicated through essays and interviews.

Technology can help counselors guide students along the sometimes confusing path to higher education. Many large high schools have college and career centers equipped with the latest software to enable students to analyze career choices, compare college programs and costs, seek scholarships, and prepare polished applications. This type of service provides a competitive edge and places pressure on all high school counselors to ensure that their students have the best guidance available in the college admissions and scholarship process.

## **Issues for Intervention**

### **Underachievement**

Researchers have conducted a number of studies on the incidence of underachievement among gifted and talented students. Academic underachievement may start with some boys as early as kindergarten, while surfacing among girls more commonly in the middle school years. Research findings indicate that as many as half of our gifted and talented children do not perform up to their academic potential. Studies of high school dropouts show that up to twenty percent of this group may be gifted and talented (Davis & Rimm, 2004).

Researchers and educators typically define underachievement as a discrepancy between ability and performance. The Sample Documents at the end of the chapter include a checklist that can assist school counselors in identifying gifted and talented underachievers. (See Sample A, page 7-19.)

Whitmore (1980) described school environments that may contribute to underachievement of gifted and talented students. Environmental factors identified by Whitmore include a lack of respect for the individual child, a strongly competitive climate, emphasis on outside evaluation, inflexibility and rigidity, overattention to errors and failure, an “all controlling teacher, and an unrewarding curriculum.”

Some of the more prominent characteristics of gifted and talented underachievers are low self-esteem, defensive avoidance of threatening academic tasks, skill deficiencies, poor study habits, problems with peers, and discipline problems. These problems may also exist in the home.

To address the problem of underachievement, guidance counselors can set up study skills groups and time management classes, emphasize responsibility and respect for education, and assist students with peer relationships. Teachers and counselors can help underachieving students see the relationship between effort and outcome. They can also facilitate communication between home and school. Counselors can make parents aware of community resources, such as family counseling centers that may provide additional assistance.

Rimm's TRIFOCAAL model (Davis & Rimm, 2004) has shown great promise for reversing underachievement in gifted and talented students. The TRIFOCAAL model requires the following six steps:

1. Assessment of skills, abilities, reinforcement contingencies, and types of underachievement;
2. Communication between parents and teachers;
3. Changing the expectations of parents, teachers, peers, and siblings;
4. Encouraging identification with achieving role models (mentors);
5. Correcting skill deficiencies;
6. Modifying home and school reinforcements that currently support underachievement.

## **Perfectionism**

Perfectionism can create great difficulties for some gifted and talented students. Perfectionism among the gifted and talented may result from receiving "all A's" and continued praise from both teachers and parents. As children internalize extreme praise over a period of years, they tend to depend on this external reward system for self-fulfillment, and they exert strong pressure on themselves to perform at a level that elicits such praise.

In addition to self-pressure, many students become victims of parent, peer, and societal pressure to achieve at higher levels. The gifted and talented student may develop unrealistic expectations of perfection in all areas of performance and, when this cannot be maintained, feel like a failure. This can result in a life filled with worry, self-imposed guilt, the tendency to overwork, or the avoidance of risk. Perfectionism is a heavy burden that, in its extreme, may cause illness or may even be associated with suicide.

Students must come to realize that perfection is impossible. They need to understand the difference between "doing your best" and "overdoing it"—between a reasonable pursuit of excellence and compulsive perfectionism. Gifted and talented students must learn that it is okay to be wrong: we learn from our mistakes. The gifted and talented must be able to take chances and laugh at themselves.



Learning to balance schoolwork, social obligations, family activities, and recreation is a life-long struggle for the perfectionist. It is the responsibility of school counselors and teachers to help gifted and talented students learn to balance all parts of their lives. Group counseling sessions—where gifted and talented students can discuss the issues of perfectionism—are appropriate. In the classroom, teachers can create a safe environment where students can experiment without fear of failure and practice risk-taking behaviors.

Often perfectionism is more apparent in the home than at school. Parents may see the child staying up late at night and/or giving up recreational activities to perfect an assignment, as well as quarreling with siblings who disturb him/her. At school, the end result (i.e., the “perfect assignment”) may be all that is noticed. The school counselor should encourage parents to report signs of excessive perfectionism in their child. In addition, counselors and teachers should look for signs of too little sleep and exquisite detail in homework assignments.

Severe cases of perfectionism should be referred to psychological or medical professionals for treatment.

## Academic Support Services

A myriad of academic support programs and experiences are available to encourage gifted and talented students to reach their potential. Those opportunities include academic assistance programs, advanced coursework, school extension programs, academic recognition programs, programs offered through community organizations, and academic competitions.

### Academic Assistance Programs

Some gifted and talented students may demonstrate a need for additional support in basic skill achievement. These students must receive academic assistance through appropriate programs and services. Such support could include tutoring, special classes, extended day programs, and computer assisted instruction. Gifted and talented students with special needs must be referred to appropriate special services programs and agencies.

## **Advanced Coursework**

- ◆ Dual enrollment: the practice of enrolling in a college or university while enrolled in high school to earn high school and college credit simultaneously
- ◆ Concurrent enrollment: the practice of enrolling in a college or university to earn college credit while attending high school
- ◆ The College Board Advanced Placement Program (high school AP courses)
- ◆ The International Baccalaureate Program (prescribed programs of study for elementary, middle and high school)
- ◆ The Governor's School for Arts and Humanities (residential program in Greenville, SC, for grade 11 and 12 and special summer programs)
- ◆ The Governor's School for Math and Science (residential program in Hartsville, SC, for grades 11 and 12 and special summer programs)

## **School Extension Programs**

- ◆ Saturday Academies: enrichment and preparatory programs
- ◆ Seminars
- ◆ Summer enrichment and preparatory programs
- ◆ Extended day experiences

## **Academic Recognition Programs**

- ◆ South Carolina Junior Scholars Program
- ◆ Duke University Talent Identification Program (See page 7-12.)
- ◆ Johns Hopkins University Summer Program for Mathematically Precocious Youth and similar programs at other colleges and universities
- ◆ The Presidential Academic Fitness Program
- ◆ National Honor Societies
- ◆ Beta Clubs
- ◆ Local school and community programs

## **Opportunities Offered Through Community Organizations**

- ◆ Business partnerships, apprenticeships, and mentoring programs

- ◆ Civic clubs (e.g., Scouts, 4-H Club, Boys and Girls Clubs)
- ◆ Civic organization projects (e.g., Junior League, Optimists)
- ◆ Volunteer opportunities
- ◆ Religious activities
- ◆ Community resources (e.g., guest speakers and teachers)

## **Academic Competitions**

- ◆ *American Computer Science League Contest* (Grades 7–12). Association of Computer Science Leagues, P.O. Box 40118, Providence, RI 02940.
- ◆ *Anthology of Poetry by Young Americans* (Grades K–12). American Academy of Poetry, P.O. Box 698, Asheboro, NC 27203.
- ◆ *Arts Recognition Talent Search* (Grade 12). National Foundation for Advancement in the Arts, 3915 N. Biscayne, Miami, FL 33137.
- ◆ *Creative with Words* (Ages 5–18). CWW Publications, P.O. Box 223226, Carmel, CA 93922.
- ◆ *Future Problem Solving* (Grades K–12). The Future Problem Solving Program, 318 W. Ann St., Ann Arbor, MI 48104.
- ◆ *International Children's Art Exhibition* (Grades K–9). Pentel of America, Ltd., 2805 Columbia St., Torrance, CA 90503.
- ◆ *International Physics Olympiad* (Grades 9–12). American Association of Physics Teachers, One Physics Ellipse, College Park, MD 20740-3845.
- ◆ *International Science Olympiads* (High School). Website: [olympiads.win.tue.nl](http://olympiads.win.tue.nl)
- ◆ *Mathematical Olympiads for Elementary and Middle Schools*. International Math Olympiads, Department E-1, 2154 Bellmore Ave., Bellmore, NY 11710-5645. Website: [www.moems.org](http://www.moems.org)
- ◆ *MathCounts* (Grades 7 & 8). MATHCOUNTS Foundation, 1420 King St., Alexandria, VA 22314. Website: [www.mathcounts.org](http://www.mathcounts.org)
- ◆ *Model United Nations* (High School). Website: [www.amun.org](http://www.amun.org)
- ◆ *National Chess Championships* (Grades K–12). U.S. Chess Federation, 186 Route 9W, New Windsor, NY 12553. Website: [www.uschess.org](http://www.uschess.org)
- ◆ *National Geography Bee* (Grades 4–8). National Geographic Society, 1145 17<sup>th</sup> St. NW, Washington, DC 20036-4688.

- ◆ *National History Day*. 0119 Cecil Hall, University of Maryland, College Park, MD 20741. Website: [www.thehistorynet.com/NationalHistoryDay](http://www.thehistorynet.com/NationalHistoryDay)
- ◆ *National Knowledge Master Open* (Grades 5–12). Academic Hallmarks, Box 998, Durango, CO 81302.
- ◆ *National Science Olympiad* (Grades K–12). Box 5477, Hauppauge, NY 11788-0121. Website: [www.geocities.com/CapeCanaveral/Lab/9699](http://www.geocities.com/CapeCanaveral/Lab/9699)
- ◆ *Odyssey of the Mind (OM)* (Grades K–12). OM Association, P.O. Box 547, Glassboro, NJ 08028-0547. Website: [www.odyssey.org](http://www.odyssey.org)
- ◆ *Optimist International Oratorical Contest* (Ages 16 and Under). 4494 Lindell Blvd., St. Louis, MO 63108.
- ◆ *South Carolina Alliance for Minority Participants (SCAMP)*. USC College of Engineering, Columbia, SC 29208.
- ◆ *Stock Market Game* (Grades 4–12). 120 Broadway, New York, NY 10271-0080. Website: [www.smg2000.org](http://www.smg2000.org)
- ◆ *Talent Identification Program* (Grade 7). Duke University, 1121 West Main St., Suite 100, Durham, NC 27701. Website: [www.shodor.org/tip](http://www.shodor.org/tip)
- ◆ *WordMasters Challenge* (Grades 3–8). 213 E. Allendale Ave., Allendale, NJ 07401.
- ◆ *Young Inventors Competition* (Grades 9–12). Foundation for a Creative America, 1755 Jefferson Davis Hwy., Suite 400, Arlington, VA 22202.
- ◆ Local, Regional, and National Science Fairs

## Technology Support Services

The rapidly expanding field of technology offers an incredible range of support services to gifted and talented students, administrators, teachers, and parents. Listed here is just a sampling of the resources now available. Students, administrators, teachers, and parents need to become familiar with the use of search engines and other tools to stay abreast of current and emerging developments.

### Technology for Students

- ◆ Distance learning, especially with two-way audio and video, is an excellent way to offer advanced courses in which only a few students seek to enroll. This is a particularly attractive option for students in smaller schools and districts. Middle and high school students alike can benefit greatly from such opportunities. The former can take courses for high school credit, while the latter can take courses for

college credit. At all levels, this technology can provide unique experiences for students to learn from experts in a field. The South Carolina Governor's School for Math and Science and SCETV have distance learning opportunities. Stanford University offers a number of on-line courses in mathematics and writing (EPGY). Counselors can check with South Carolina colleges and universities for other on-line course offerings.

- ◆ The World Wide Web provides research opportunities that are limited only by a student's imagination. Students must know and abide by school districts' acceptable use policies.
- ◆ E-mail and monitored chat rooms can enable students to communicate with experts anywhere in the world. Supervised chat rooms can offer gifted and talented students the opportunity to interact with other students anywhere on any topic of interest. Some Internet service providers offer supervised chat rooms.
- ◆ Other technology being used by South Carolina students includes the following: digital cameras; presentation, simulation, and word processing software; laser disc programs; and video microscopes.

### **Technology for Administrators, Teachers, and Parents**

- ◆ The Gifted Resources Home Page (Website: [www.eskimo.com/~user/kids.html](http://www.eskimo.com/~user/kids.html)) provides information for administrators, teachers, and parents, as well as links to many other sites. There is also a section for "key pals"—computer pen pals.
- ◆ The National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented (Website: [www.gifted.uconn.edu](http://www.gifted.uconn.edu)) has a complete listing of their publications, along with selected abstracts. Several publications deal with identifying and retaining underrepresented populations in gifted and talented programs.
- ◆ The Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) has a system of networks, including one called "Developing Giftedness and Talent," run by Brian Reid at the University of Alabama-Birmingham. For more information, visit the ASCD Home Page (Website: [www.ascd.org](http://www.ascd.org)); then click on "Constituent Relations," "Who We Serve," and "Networks."
- ◆ The Education Resources Information Center (ERIC) is made up of 16 separate information clearinghouses, including one for Disabilities and Gifted Education. Searches for information can be conducted on-line (Website: [www.ericec.org](http://www.ericec.org)).
- ◆ GiftedNet is an on-line mailing list dealing with gifted and talented issues. Since GiftedNet is located at the College of William and Mary (Website: [www.wm.edu/education/giftednet.htm](http://www.wm.edu/education/giftednet.htm)), there are many discussions about their instructional units. Discussions also cover a wide range of topics, from gifted and talented math curricula to the pros and cons of acceleration. To subscribe, send e-mail to the following address: [listserv@listserv.cc.wm.edu](mailto:listserv@listserv.cc.wm.edu). Skip the subject

line; then, in the first text line, type the following: SUBSCRIBE GIFTEDNET-L  
Firstname Lastname (e.g., SUBSCRIBE GIFTEDNET-L Jane Doe).

- ◆ Teachers can find lesson plans on-line for almost any topic imaginable. *Classroom Connect* describes many such websites, as well as information on virtual field studies.
- ◆ Teachers can get on-line assistance with problem-based learning from the Center for Problem-Based Learning. (Website: [www.imsa.edu/team/cpbl/cpbl.html](http://www.imsa.edu/team/cpbl/cpbl.html)). This site includes sample units and tutorials on writing problem-based units.
- ◆ Information on teaching critical evaluation skills is available on-line as well (e.g., Website: [www2.widener.edu/Wolfram-Memorial-Library/webeval.htm](http://www2.widener.edu/Wolfram-Memorial-Library/webeval.htm)).
- ◆ U-ACHIEV is a site for the discussion of academic underachievement, including, but not limited to, gifted and talented underachievers. To subscribe to this site, send e-mail to the following address: [majordomo@virginia.edu](mailto:majordomo@virginia.edu). In the subject line, type subscribe; then, in the message line, type subscribe u-achiev.
- ◆ TAG-L is an open forum that discusses general issues related to gifted and talented education. To subscribe, send e-mail to the following address: [listserv@listserv.nodak.edu](mailto:listserv@listserv.nodak.edu). Skip the subject line; then, in the first text line, type the following: SUBSCRIBE TAG-L Firstname Lastname.
- ◆ Of particular interest to parents is TAGFAM, a discussion group that supports families of gifted and talented children. Topics of discussion include parenting, home schooling, distance learning, and many others. TAGFAM generates a large number of messages. To subscribe, send e-mail to the following address: [listserv@maelstrom.stjohns.edu](mailto:listserv@maelstrom.stjohns.edu). Skip the subject line; then, in the first text line, type the following: sub TAGFAM Firstname Lastname.
- ◆ Administrators, teachers, and parents can follow the activities of the South Carolina General Assembly at [www.lpittr.state.sc.us/homepage.htm](http://www.lpittr.state.sc.us/homepage.htm). This site includes updates on various bills that are being considered, as well as a listing of previous bills from the last several years.

As the state becomes more connected to the Internet, additional resources will become available. Readers who locate other websites that would be interest to administrators, teachers, parents, students, or others involved in gifted and talented education should contact the South Carolina Consortium for Gifted Education, P.O. Box 255, Irmo, SC 29063. Please send a brief description of the site and its address.

## Parent Education Support Services

Parents are the most significant influence on the lives of their children. Consider these findings from a study of MacArthur Fellows (Cox, Daniel, & Boston, 1985):

Almost without exception the MacArthur Fellows pay tribute to their parents. While the education level of the parents varied, and the level of financial backing as well, virtually all the parents let their children know the value of learning by personal example. The parents supported without pushing. Their homes had books, journals, newspapers. They took the children to the library. The parents themselves read, and they read to their children. Most important, they respected their children's ideas. (p. 24)

Similarly, Bloom (1985) has noted the important role of parents, family support, and sacrifice in the achievement of gifted and talented individuals across various disciplines and professions.

Education programs for parents of the gifted and talented must address a number of issues and themes. A primary need of parents is assistance in providing for their gifted and talented children's cognitive and affective development. Shore, Cornell, Robinson, and Ward (1991) suggest the following as appropriate issues for parenting education programs:

- ◆ Developing awareness of how personal needs and feelings influence the relationship with the child;
- ◆ Avoiding excessive emphasis on developing the child's giftedness;
- ◆ Discouraging children's perfectionism and excessive self-criticism;
- ◆ Encouraging social as well as academic development;
- ◆ Facilitating social development through ability/peer contact;
- ◆ Fostering potential for giftedness through preschool intervention;
- ◆ Being sensitive to potential sibling adjustment problems.

Parents appreciate information on the characteristics and needs of gifted and talented children, as well as advice on problems or issues such as underachievement, carelessness, time management, and career/college choice. Also crucial for parents is information regarding the educational offerings provided by the school—through both the gifted and talented program and the general education program.

## **Parent Education Delivery Models**

Districts can utilize various delivery models for parent education. Most districts provide parent orientation sessions to showcase their gifted and talented programs, explain the identification process, and provide parenting advice. Throughout the school year, additional parent education services may be offered—e.g., parenting sessions on particular topics; videos to demonstrate effective parenting practices, such as questioning and discussion techniques; a lending library for parents, with books and journals on gifted and talented education and parenting, as well as information on

accessing relevant websites. Many districts serve parents through an association and some have even formed foundations where parents work to provide additional financial support to the gifted and talented program. Parent education delivery models are limited only by local convention and the creativity of the gifted and talented program staff.

Gifted and talented programs must also use the print media to communicate effectively with parents. Program notice and identification procedures must be communicated to all parents. Additionally, parents of children qualified for the gifted and talented program must receive written policies and procedures, including the program's mission, curriculum goals, evaluation of student achievement, and evaluation of program effectiveness.

Most gifted and talented programs go beyond this basic level of parent communication—e.g., through the newsletters, brochures, videos, e-mail and/or websites. One South Carolina district uses parent volunteers to print and disseminate a regular newsletter that highlights educational opportunities in the community. Another has made videos to describe the curriculum, showing gifted and talented students at work on units of instruction.

Parents need access to the gifted and talented program staff for answers to their questions or concerns. Communicating with parents is a time consuming, but rewarding practice in an effective gifted and talented program.



## National and State Organizations

In addition to the many resources listed and described throughout this chapter, key national and state organizations offer support services for those involved in gifted and talented education.

- ◆ The National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC): [www.nagc.org](http://www.nagc.org)
- ◆ The National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented:  
[www.gifted.uconn.edu](http://www.gifted.uconn.edu)
- ◆ The Center for Gifted Education, College of William & Mary:  
[www.cfge.wm.edu](http://www.cfge.wm.edu)
- ◆ Council for Exceptional Children (CEC): [www.cec.sped.org](http://www.cec.sped.org)
- ◆ The South Carolina Consortium for Gifted Education (SCCGE):  
P.O. Box 255, Irmo, SC 29063
- ◆ The South Carolina Department of Education: [www.myschools.com](http://www.myschools.com)

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## Sample Documents

### Sample A

A Checklist to Identify Gifted and Talented Underachievers	
<p>Observe and interact with the student over a period of at least two weeks to determine if he or she possesses the following characteristics. If the student exhibits 10 or more of the listed traits—including all that are asterisked (*)—individual intelligence testing (e.g., with the Stanford-Binet or WISC-R) is recommended to establish whether he or she is a gifted and talented underachiever.</p>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	*poor test performance
<input type="checkbox"/>	*achieving at or below grade-level expectations in one or all of the basic skill areas: reading, language arts, mathematics
<input type="checkbox"/>	*daily work frequently incomplete or poorly done
<input type="checkbox"/>	*superior comprehension and retention of concepts when interested
<input type="checkbox"/>	*vast gap between qualitative level of oral and written work
<input type="checkbox"/>	exceptionally large repertoire of factual knowledge
<input type="checkbox"/>	vitality of imagination and creativity
<input type="checkbox"/>	persistent dissatisfaction with work accomplished, even in the arts
<input type="checkbox"/>	seems to avoid trying new activities to prevent imperfect performance; evidences perfectionism, self-criticism
<input type="checkbox"/>	shows initiative in pursuing self-selected projects at home
<input type="checkbox"/>	*has a wide range of interests and possibly special expertise in an area of investigation and research
<input type="checkbox"/>	*evidences low self-esteem through tendencies to withdraw or be aggressive in the classroom
<input type="checkbox"/>	does not function comfortably or constructively in a group of any size
<input type="checkbox"/>	shows acute sensitivity and perceptions related to self, others, and life in general
<input type="checkbox"/>	tends to set unrealistic self-expectations; goals too high or too low
<input type="checkbox"/>	dislikes practice work or drill for memorization and mastery
<input type="checkbox"/>	easily distracted; unable to focus attention and concentrate efforts on tasks
<input type="checkbox"/>	has an indifferent or negative attitude toward school
<input type="checkbox"/>	resists teacher efforts to motivate or discipline behavior in class
<input type="checkbox"/>	has difficulty in peer relationships; maintains few friendships

Note: Adapted from Whitmore (1980, p. 282).